



February 06, 2009

To: First Steps Providers
Interested Parties

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Subject: **Budget Update for First Steps MSS/ICM Providers**

We appreciate the many suggestions and comments received in the DOH First Steps Mailbox in response to our request in the communication dated January 22. They reflect thoughtful insights as well as practical solutions which will be taken into consideration.

The work of the First Steps state team continues on multiple fronts:

- Compilation and review of provider input received.
- Meetings with HRSA rates to review potential fiscal options.
- Meetings with Rules and Publications about proposing WAC and Billing Instructions language that would allow more flexibility to implement changes in the program. All potential program changes proposed to date will require a WAC change to proceed with implementation.
- Meetings with the First Steps Workgroup focused on reviewing data collected and analyzed by the RDA section of DSHS.

- Continued refinement of a risk factor list as a possible means to focus MSS on better serving the women at highest risk of poor birth outcomes, while maintaining a level of service for lower risk women.
- Development of a training plan to address any changes to the program model.
- Reviewing the Infant Case Management program to determine if changes in that program could help meet the budget reduction.

As the state team continues its work, the legislative process at the state capital also continues to move forward. One of their tasks ahead, is to align the proposed budgets of the House, Senate, and Governor, so a final budget can be implemented. Until this occurs, we expect the process of making changes to the program to be fluid. Program change decisions and corresponding deadlines for implementation will not be finalized until the legislative process is complete.

You may continue to provide suggestions and comments **to the First Steps DOH Messages mailbox:** firststepsmessages@doh.wa.gov throughout this process.